



POLI:3512:0001 | FALL 2025

## INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT

[The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences](#)

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### Course Instructor

**Instructor:** Chase LaSpisa (he/him), [Department of Political Science](#)

**Email:** [claspisa@uiowa.edu](mailto:claspisa@uiowa.edu)

**Office Hours:** Monday, 1:00-3:00pm, Thursday 2:30-3:30pm

**Office Location:** 344 Schaeffer Hall

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### Office Hours

Students are invited to drop by during office hours to discuss questions about the course material or address any other concerns. I am also available by appointment if you are unable to attend drop-in hours. To meet on Zoom instead of in-person, please email me to request a Zoom link.

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### Academic Course Home

[Department of Political Science](#)  
[The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences](#)

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### Class Meeting Location and Times

14 Schaeffer Hall, Tuesday/Thursday, 12:30pm-1:45pm

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### Course Site

To access the course site, log into [Iowa Courses Online \(ICON\)](#) using your Hawk ID and password.

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### Course Policies

Please see University policies here:

<https://provost.uiowa.edu/student-course-policies>

Other policies are listed at the end of the syllabus.

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### Department Executive Officer (DEO):

Professor Julianna Pacheco: [polisci@uiowa.edu](mailto:polisci@uiowa.edu) or [julianna-pacheco@uiowa.edu](mailto:julianna-pacheco@uiowa.edu)

### Course Description and Learning Outcomes

International conflict is one of the, if not the, primary ingredients of international politics. This course examines the conditions that make for war and peace in international relations, and the course will mostly focus on conflict between states. The course begins with a discussion of the scientific study of interstate warfare. We will learn how war and peace are defined and how scholars study these phenomena. Later sections of the course examine topics like the causes of war, the outcomes and consequences of war, and peaceful solutions that have been offered to help prevent or limit war. Upon completion of this course, students should be familiar with the factors that mitigate or exacerbate military conflict between states. Students should also be able to apply these factors in examining real-world scenarios, such as studying historical cases of war or assessing the prospects for future conflict in troubled areas of the world.

### Course Specific Policies

- **Classroom Culture and Expectations:** This course will be a space for all students to learn, engage with, and question the content being taught. I expect students to arrive at class having read the assigned readings and ready to discuss and engage with the material, and I will do the same. I encourage students to maintain an open mind and to use their unique experiences to inform their work during the course and to contribute to any discussions. With that in mind, all interactions in the course should remain respectful and focused on the scientific study of international conflict.
- **Due Date Extensions and Late Assignments:** I expect you to keep track of all due dates throughout the semester and submit your work in accordance with this expectation. However, I understand that unforeseen circumstances do arise and may impede your ability to meet deadlines. I will grant due date extensions on a case-by-case basis, depending on the individual circumstances and the student's

communication with me. In general, I will not retroactively grant due date extensions. Any assignment or paper submitted after the due date without having contacted me about an extension may be assigned a 10% penalty per day late otherwise.

- **Communication:** The best way to communicate with me is via email ([claspisa@uiowa.edu](mailto:claspisa@uiowa.edu)). If you send me an email, please allow 48 hours for me to respond. I will often respond faster than this, but I do try to minimize how much I check my emails in the evenings and on weekends. Please follow up if you have not received a response within a few days as I might have missed your email and plan accordingly if you have time-sensitive questions or are unsure about something related to an assignment. All electronic communications will be either through your Ulowa emails or posted as announcements on ICON. I recommend you have ICON notifications sent to your University of Iowa email address. See information about the use of UI email for all communications in the university policies section.
- **Technology:** You are allowed to use technology (i.e., laptops) in this class. I respect your need for your technology to take notes and engage with the material and ask that it will be used in a productive and nondisruptive way during class.
- **Artificial Intelligence (AI) Usage:** Students may not use AI for any written assignments, papers, or exams. Penalties for AI usage may include grade deductions or zero credit.

## Course Requirements

### Grading System

Your final course grade is calculated as follows:

Class Attendance	10%
Pop Quizzes	15%
Midterm Exams	50%
Group Project	25%

Extra credit opportunities might be given throughout the semester. Final grades will be awarded based on the following ranges:

<b>A+</b> (99-100)	<b>A</b> (93-98)	<b>A-</b> (90-92)	
<b>B+</b> (87-89)	<b>B</b> (83-86)	<b>B-</b> (80-82)	
<b>C+</b> (77-79)	<b>C</b> (73-76)	<b>C-</b> (70-72)	
<b>D+</b> (67-69)	<b>D</b> (63-66)	<b>D-</b> (60-62)	<b>F</b> (<60)

### Class Attendance (10%)

Each class period (starting in week 2), I will send around an attendance sheet for students to sign. You are allowed to miss two class periods without penalty. Each missed class after the first two classes incurs a 5% deduction from the attendance portion of the grade. For example, if you miss a total of 4 class periods, you will receive a grade of 90% for the class attendance part of your grade. Arriving late or leaving class early can be treated by a missed class period based on the instructor's discretion.

The two missed classes allowed without penalty are meant to facilitate missing for any unforeseen circumstances, but I understand there are sometimes legitimate reasons why students cannot attend class beyond two times a semester. I will follow the university's policies on student absences due to illness, religious observances, military service obligations, unavoidable circumstances, or university-authorized activities. Students may use the CLAS absence form to communicate with me, and I will decide if the absence is excused or unexcused. The form is located on ICON under Student Tools. If you must miss class for any of the reasons described above, if you notify me in advance, your absence will be excused and will not hurt your attendance grade in the class. However, only in extenuating circumstances will I retroactively excuse an absence. Therefore, it is your responsibility to plan and proactively communicate with me if you know you will be absent from class.

### Pop Quizzes (15%)

Several days throughout the semester, students will take a short multiple-choice quiz at the beginning of class. The quiz will contain questions related to the assigned reading on the day in which the quiz is administered. Students will be allowed to drop their two lowest quiz grades. There are no make-up quizzes. Any missed quizzes are automatically dropped as the lowest scores.

### Examinations (50%, 25% each exam)

There are two examinations currently scheduled for Thursday, October 9<sup>th</sup> and Thursday, November 20<sup>th</sup>. The exams may include multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. Make-up exams will be given in accordance with university absence policies and reasons (see below in CLAS policies section). If any other emergency arises, you will need to contact the instructor **before** the exam or you will receive zero credit.

### Group Project (25%)

Each student will be placed in a group consisting of seven to ten students. Each group will receive various pieces of information about a (fictitious) pair of countries and will be asked to predict whether these countries will fight a war based on this information. In this project, students will draw upon the theoretical material covered in class to make their predictions. Each group will be required to make a brief (10-15 minute) Power Point presentation during one of the last two class periods on December 9<sup>th</sup> and December 11<sup>th</sup>, in addition to submitting a paper summarizing the group's findings, and a short paper describing each group member's experience with the project. More information about the group projects will be posted on ICON.

### Required Reading (Available at the Hawk Shop)

Mitchell, Sara McLaughlin and John A. Vasquez. 2024. *What Do We Know about War? Revised Third Edition*. Rowman & Littlefield. ISBN: 978153193167 (paperback, \$68.75); ISBN: 9781538193174 (e-text, \$56).

**\* Note the required edition of the book! Do not purchase/rent a different edition! \***

All articles marked with an asterisk (\*) below can be found on the ICON course website. You can also find a copy of the syllabus and copies of the group project assignment. The course schedule is subject to change based on certain circumstances. Any changes to the course schedule will be communicated clearly. You can earn two extra credit points by emailing me a picture of Gandalf before the first exam.

### **Outline of Topics and Weekly Readings (MV=Mitchell & Vasquez)**

<u>Date/Topic</u>	<u>Assigned Readings</u>
<i>Week 1: Introduction</i>	
Tuesday, August 26 Intro. to the Study of Warfare	MV, Introduction
Thursday, August 28 Russia-Ukraine War	MV, Chapter 20
<i>Week 2: Dangerous Dyads &amp; Power</i>	
Tuesday, September 2 Dangerous Dyads	*Bremer, Dangerous Dyads
Thursday, September 4 Power Distributions	MV, Chapter 2 *Case: Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988)

<u>Date/Topic</u>	<u>Assigned Readings</u>
<i>Week 3: Territorial Disputes &amp; Issue Approach</i>	
Tuesday, September 9 Territorial Disputes	MV, Chapter 1 *Case: Mexican-American (1846-1848)
Thursday, September 11 Issue Approach	*Hensel et al, Bones of Contention
<i>Week 4: Alliances and Deterrence</i>	
Tuesday, September 16 Alliances & Deterrence	MV, Chapter 3 *Case: Sinai War (1956)
Thursday, September 18 Alliances & Culture	*Lee et al, Do Birds of a Feather Deter Better?
<i>Week 5: Arms Races and Rivalry</i>	
Tuesday, September 23 Arms Races	MV, Chapter 4 *Case: Six Day War (1967)
Thursday, September 25 Rivalry	MV, Chapter 5 *Case: Azeri-Armenian (1993-1994)
<i>Week 6: Environment/Maritime and Leaders</i>	
Tuesday, September 30 Environment & Maritime	MV, Chapter 13 *LaSpisa and Mitchell, Testing the Waters
Thursday, October 2 Leaders	MV, Chapter 14 *Case: Falklands (1982)
<i>Week 7: Exam 1</i>	
Tuesday, October 7	Review and Questions for Exam 1
Thursday, October 9	<b>Exam #1</b>
<i>Week 8: Liberal and Territorial Peace</i>	
Tuesday, October 14 Liberal Peace	MV, Chapter 8 *Case: Turko-Cypriot (1974)
Thursday, October 16 Territorial Peace	MV, Chapter 9
<i>Week 9: Nuclear Weapons and Conflict Management</i>	
Tuesday, October 21 Nuclear Weapons	MV, Chapter 6 *Case: Kargil War (1999)
Thursday, October 23 Conflict Management	MV, Chapter 11 *Case: Chad-Libya (1986-1987)

<u>Date/Topic</u>	<u>Assigned Readings</u>
<i>Week 10: The Peace Puzzle and Outcomes &amp; Consequences</i>	
Tuesday, October 28	MV, Chapter 10
Peace Puzzle	
Thursday, October 30	MV, Chapter 7
Outcomes & Consequences	*Case: Franco-Prussian (1870-1871)
<i>Week 11: Leadership Consequences &amp; Group Work</i>	
Tuesday, November 4	*Bueno de Mesquita & Siverson
Leadership Consequences	*Case: Ogaden (1977-1978)
Thursday, November 6	No class, work on group project
<i>Week 12: Future of War: Cyber Warfare and Decline of Warfare?</i>	
Tuesday, November 11	MV, Chapter 12
Cyber Warfare	
Thursday, November 13	MV, Chapter 16
Decline of Warfare?	
<i>Week 13: Exam Review &amp; Exam 2</i>	
Tuesday, November 18	MV, Chapter 19 (review of book)
Review and Questions for Exam 2	
Thursday, November 20	<b>Exam #2</b>
<i>Week 14: Fall Break</i>	
Tuesday, November 25	<b>No class, Fall Break</b>
Thursday, November 27	<b>No class, Fall Break</b>
<i>Week 15: Group Project Work</i>	
Tuesday, December 2	<b>In-class time to work on Group Projects</b>
Thursday, December 4	Time to work on Group Projects
<i>Week 16: Group Project Presentations</i>	
Tuesday, December 9	Presentations for Group Projects
Thursday, December 11	Presentations for Group Projects

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES  
Information for CLAS Undergraduates, Fall 2025

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**Course's College (Administrative Home)**

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) is the home of this course, and CLAS governs the add and drop deadlines, academic misconduct policies, and other undergraduate policies and procedures. Other UI colleges may have different policies. This course is through the Department of Political Science; DEO: Julie Pacheco, 343 Schaeffer Hall, [julianna-pacheco@uiowa.edu](mailto:julianna-pacheco@uiowa.edu).

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**Academic Honesty and Misconduct**

All students in CLAS courses are expected to abide by the [college's standards of academic honesty](#). Undergraduate academic misconduct must be reported by instructors to CLAS according to [these procedures](#).

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**Student Complaints**

Students with a complaint about a grade or a related matter should first discuss the situation with the instructor and/or the course supervisor (if applicable), and finally with the DEO (Chair) of the department, school or program offering the course. Sometimes students will be referred to the department or program's Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS) or Director of Graduate Studies (DGS).

Undergraduate students should contact [CLAS Undergraduate Programs](#) for support when the matter is not resolved at the previous level. Graduate students should contact the [CLAS Graduate Affairs Manager](#) when additional support is needed.

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**Drop Deadline for this Course**

You may drop an individual course before the drop deadline; after this deadline you will need collegiate approval. You can look up the drop deadline for this course [here](#). When you drop a course, a "W" will appear on your transcript. The mark of "W" is a neutral mark that does not affect your GPA. To discuss how dropping (or staying in) a course might affect your academic goals, please contact your Academic Advisor. Directions for adding or dropping a course and other registration changes can be found on the [Registrar's website](#). Undergraduate students can find policies on dropping CLAS courses [here](#). Graduate students should adhere to the [academic deadlines](#) and policies set by the Graduate College.

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**UI Email**

Students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their UI email address (uiowa.edu) and must use this address for any communication with instructors or staff in the UI community. For the privacy and the protection of student records, UI faculty and staff can only correspond with UI email addresses.

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**Date and Time of the Final Exam**

The [final examination date and time](#) will be announced by the Registrar generally by the fifth week of classes, and it will be announced on the course ICON site once it is known. Do not plan your end of the semester travel plans until the final exam schedule is made public. It is your responsibility to know the date, time, and place of the final exam. According to the Registrar's final exam policy, students have a maximum

of two weeks after the announced final exam schedule to request a change if an exam conflict exists or if a student has more than two exams scheduled for the same day (see the [policy](#) here).

### **Resources for Students**

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Tutor Iowa: <https://tutor.uiowa.edu/>

Writing Center: <http://writingcenter.uiowa.edu/>

Speaking Center: <http://speakingcenter.uiowa.edu/>

### **Attendance and Accommodations**

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#### *Absences from Class*

University regulations require that students be allowed to make up examinations which have been missed due to illness, religious holy days, military service obligations, including service-related medical appointments, jury duty, or other unavoidable circumstances or other university-sponsored activities. Students should work with their instructors regarding making up other missed work, such as assignments, quizzes, and classroom attendance.

#### *Absences for Religious Holy Days*

The university is prepared to make reasonable accommodations for students whose religious holy days coincide with their classroom assignments, test schedules, and classroom attendance expectations. Students must notify their instructors in writing of any such religious holy day conflicts or absences within the first few days of the semester or session, and no later than the third week of the semester. If the conflict or absence will occur within the first three weeks of the semester, the student should notify the instructor as soon as possible. See [Policy Manual 8.2 Absences for Religious Holy Days](#) for additional information.

#### *Absences for Military Service Obligations*

Students absent from class or class-related requirements due to U.S. veteran or U.S. military service obligations (including military service–related medical appointments, military orders, and National Guard Service obligations) shall be excused without any grading adjustment or other penalty. Instructors shall make reasonable accommodations to allow students to make up, without penalty, tests and assignments they missed because of veteran or military service obligations. Reasonable accommodations may include making up missed work following the service obligation; completing work in advance; completing an equivalent assignment; or waiver of the assignment without penalty. In all instances, students bear the responsibility to communicate with their instructors about such veteran or military service obligations, to meet course expectations and requirements.

#### *Accommodations for Students with Disabilities*

The University is committed to providing an educational experience that is accessible to all students. If a student has a diagnosed disability or other disabling condition that may impact the student's ability to complete the course requirements as stated in the syllabus, the student may seek accommodations through [Student Disability Services](#) (SDS). SDS is responsible for making [Letters of Accommodation \(LOA\)](#) available to the student. **The student must provide an LOA to the instructor as early in the semester as possible, but requests not made at least two weeks prior to the scheduled activity for which an accommodation is sought may not be accommodated.** The LOA will specify what reasonable course accommodations the student is eligible for and those the instructor should provide. Additional information can be found on the [SDS website](#).

Students are welcome to initiate **conversations** about any accommodations such as those related to any of the above reasons (disabilities, religious holy days, military service, etc.). If you would like to discuss

accommodations, please send me an email to set up a time when we can discuss about what constitutes a reasonable accommodation for the specific circumstance.

#### Free Speech and Expression

The University of Iowa supports and upholds the First Amendment protection of freedom of speech and the principles of academic and artistic freedom. We are committed to open inquiry, vigorous debate, and creative expression inside and outside of the classroom. Visit the [Free Speech at Iowa website](#) for more information on the university's policies on free speech and academic freedom.

#### Non-discrimination Statement

The University of Iowa prohibits discrimination in employment, educational programs, and activities on the basis of race, creed, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, pregnancy (including childbirth and related conditions), disability, genetic information, status as a U.S. veteran, service in the U.S. military, sexual orientation, gender identity, or associational preferences. The university also affirms its commitment to providing equal opportunities and equal access to university facilities. For additional information on nondiscrimination policies, contact the Senior Director, Office of Civil Rights Compliance, the University of Iowa, 202 Jessup Hall, Iowa City, IA 52242-1316, 319-335-0705, [ui-ocrc@uiowa.edu](mailto:ui-ocrc@uiowa.edu). Although not required, students have the option to share their pronouns and chosen/preferred names in class, and their [gender](#) and chosen/preferred [names](#) through MyUI. Instructors and advisors can find information about a student's chosen/preferred name in MyUI.

#### Classroom Expectations

Students are expected to comply with University policies regarding appropriate classroom behavior as outlined in the [Code of Student Life](#). While students have the right to express themselves and participate freely in class, it is expected that students will behave with the same level of courtesy and respect in the virtual class setting (whether asynchronous or synchronous) as they would in an in-person classroom. Failure to follow behavior expectations as outlined in the [Code of Student Life](#) may be addressed by the instructor and may also result in discipline under the [Code of Student Life](#) policies governing E.5 Disruptive Behavior or E.6 Failure to Comply with University Directive.

#### Class Recordings

The sessions in this course will be **not** recorded or live-streamed. The unauthorized video or audio recording of academic activities (e.g., lectures, course discussions, office hours, etc.) by a student is prohibited. Students with a reasonable accommodation for recording approved by Student Disability Services should notify each instructor and provide the Letter of Accommodation prior to using the accommodation. A student may record classroom activities with prior written permission from the instructor and notice to other students in the class that audio or video recording may occur. Any and all classroom recording must be for personal academic use only. The distribution, sharing, sale, or posting of recordings on the internet (including social media), in whole or in part, is prohibited and doing so may be a violation of the Code of Student Life and/or state or federal privacy, copyright, or other laws.

#### Mental Health

Students are encouraged to be mindful of their mental health and seek help as a preventive measure or if feeling overwhelmed and/or struggling to meet course expectations. Students are encouraged to talk to their instructor for assistance with specific class-related concerns. For additional support and counseling, students are encouraged to contact University Counseling Service (UCS). Information about UCS, including resources and how to schedule an appointment, can be found at [counseling.uiowa.edu](https://counseling.uiowa.edu). Find out more about UI mental health services at: [mentalhealth.uiowa.edu](https://mentalhealth.uiowa.edu).



### Basic Needs and Student Support

It can be difficult to maintain focus and be present if you are experiencing challenges with meeting basic needs or navigating personal crisis situations. The Office of the Dean of Students can help. Contact us for one-on-one support, identifying options, and to locate and access basic needs resources (such as food, rent, childcare, etc.).

### Student Care and Assistance

132 IMU

[dos-assistance@uiowa.edu](mailto:dos-assistance@uiowa.edu)

319-335-1162

Basic Needs info:

- [Food Pantry at Iowa](#)
- [Clothing Closet](#)
- [Basic Needs and Support Resources](#)

### Sexual Harassment/Sexual Misconduct and Supportive Measures

The University of Iowa prohibits all forms of sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, and related retaliation. The [Policy on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct](#) governs actions by students, faculty, staff and visitors. Incidents of sexual harassment or sexual misconduct can be reported to the [Office of Civil Rights Compliance](#) or to the [Department of Campus Safety](#). Students impacted by sexual harassment or sexual misconduct may be eligible for academic supportive measures and can learn more by [contacting the Office of Civil Rights Compliance](#). Information about confidential resources and videos explaining these resources can be found on the [Office of Civil Rights Compliance website](#).

### Conflict Resolution

The Office of the Ombudsperson is a confidential, impartial, informal, and independent resource for any member of the university community with a problem or concern. The Office of the Ombudsperson offers a safe place to discuss conflicts or concerns. Students are encouraged to reach out for assistance. The office will brainstorm with students to help identify options, answer any questions, and provide referrals to other offices as appropriate. More information about the Office of the Ombudsperson, including how to schedule an appointment, can be found at [ombudsperson.org.uiowa.edu](http://ombudsperson.org.uiowa.edu).